

DEFENCE

XVIII.

OF

THE PROTESTANT METHODISTS,

AGAINST THE CALUMNIOUS CHARGES

OF

MR. DANIEL ISAAC.

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OF

THE PROTESTANT METHODISTS.

IF the reader chooses to believe it, Mr. Isaac's Letters to the Protestant Methodists are intended to reclaim them from the error of their way, and to bring them back to the ancient fold. Had this really been his design however, he would assuredly have employed other arguments, instead of giving misstatements for facts, and reproach in the place of admonition. Scurrility is of all other means the least adapted to effect any moral good; and before he was driven to this course he must himself have felt all that chagrin and disappointment which he imputes to one of his antagonists; "for no one will give him credit for it, that he would substitute abuse in the place of argument, if he could have answered his opponents by scripture and reason." Despairing of this, and determining with all his might to oppose those whom he could not reclaim, he thought no ink could be black enough to pourtray their characters, or contain too large a portion of aquafortis. Revenge is sweet when there are no better passions to be indulged.

In addressing his letters to the "private members" of the new connection, instead of answering what has already been urged in their defence, he has given proof of not having forgotten his own maxim, that "first to divide and then destroy, has always been the policy of the prince of darkness." The attempt to alienate the "private members" from their principal friends by exciting unfounded suspicions and distrust, by dark insinuations against their pastors and teachers as utterly unworthy of any confidence, and by heaping together odious epithets and artful inuendoes, too gross to be repeated, and too scandalous to be believed, can

produce but one effect,—that of sinking the writer in the esteem of the religious public of every denomination, but can in nowise operate to the disadvantage of the calumniated party. Poor indeed will be the recompense, found in the plaudits of inconsiderate and violent partisans, in many respects less estimable than himself, for an outrage on truth and decency which his own judgment and conscience must disapprove.

Had any thing fair and manly been intended, Mr. Isaac would have employed his fertile genius, not in justifying and defending the wanton acts of officious pride and arrogance, but in a close and candid examination of the grievances and complaints of his humbler brethren, and would at least have attempted to conciliate where he could not successfully plant conviction. This would have been far more consistent with the christian profession, than dealing in opprobrious epithets and coarse invectives, though somewhat more difficult of achievement. Yet even this is not 'the head and front of his offending.' It is to be feared there are numerous assertions which it would be difficult to reconcile to a strictly conscientious regard to truth. It would indeed be ungenerous to construe in its full and literal import, every rough expression of an impetuous and fearless writer; but truth is at all times indispensable, and a christian writer is especially expected to 'speak the truth in love.' But if this be too much to expect of Mr. Isaac, he is required at least to be correct in his statements, let his reasonings be what they may: it is too much to be imposed upon by sophistry and untruth both at once.

Though Mr. Isaac attacks the seceders with the envenomed weapons of calumny and misrepresentation, and 'whets his tongue like a sword, and bends his bow to shoot his arrows, even bitter words;' he professes nevertheless to be the advocate of union among christians, and deprecates all heresy and schism. The peace however which he proposes is like that offered in former times to the reformers and nonconformists, whose reconciliation to mother church was to be effected by the unconditional surrender of their conscience and understanding to the priests of popery and

episcopacy. The union it seems is to be brought about, not by mutual concession, nor by any conciliatory measures, but by retractations and acknowledgements all on one side; by an unreserved submission to the dominant party, by whom the seceders feel themselves injured and oppressed. The methodist conference is as infallible as the papal see, it can do no wrong, the error and the blame must all be on the other side. So thinks Charles with his chamber of deputies, and Don Miguel with his priests; despotism is always right, till the people have taught it a little wisdom.

The conference advocate has made out a long indictment against the seceding brethren; and though he has not succeeded to his wishes, he has done what he could to exhibit some heavy charges against them. Assuming that the party he represents is an absolute monarchy, reigning by divine right, he charges them with joining in a "revolt," and raising an "insurrection." Then, considering his coadjutors as so many representatives in parliament, making laws for the government of the country, he gives to their dictates and decisions all the authority of legislative enactments; compares them with the profound institutions of Moses and king Alfred, elevates himself to the judicial bench, and finds the seceders guilty of nearly as many crimes and misdemeanors as would fill a Newgate calendar. Believing also, in the simplicity of his heart, that he and his party are the only conservators of orthodoxy, the only honest men in the world, he represents the seceders as little better than infidels, "showing no more regard to the bible than to an old almanac, framing their regulations as opposite to the scriptures as possible, and being led away and deluded by dishonest and designing men." Overlooking the sheer wantonness of such imputations, there is something in the very style itself so secular, so popish, so revolting from the modest and unassuming spirit of christianity, as immediately to excite disgust. What indeed, is it come to this; that the Wesleyan preachers are sovereigns in their own right, and the people their vassals? That the preachers are legisla-

tors, whose laws they must implicitly obey; and judges, to pass sentence upon them as criminals at their bar? If things be indeed come to this pass, it is high time for the people to look to themselves. To your tents, oh Israel!

If Mr. Isaac be not ashamed of his coadjutor, there is one who can keep him in countenance, and adopt all his arrogant phraseology. 'One of his own poets has said' of the seceders, that they are "in a state of open insurrection," and want to "snatch the reins from the lawful authority." It is a pity then he did not send for Sir Richard Birnie and a party of military to quell the riot. "They are so unscrupulous," he also says, "that they boldly impugn both their superiors and the law; they despise government," and frightful to tell, "they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities!" But in the name of common sense, what is this "law," this "government;" who are these "superiors," these "dignities?" A little rhetoric will explain the mystery. Call the travelling preachers the "superiors," say that the conference is the "government," the heady and high-minded among them the "dignities," and that the annual advice they offer is the "law;" and then you see at once what is the government, and who are the dignities, which the seceders have had the awful presumption to "despise!"

Mr. Isaac however does not mean all that he says. He is an accuser of the brethren, and calls them ill names, but still he thinks them good people and good methodists. He admits that they hear "the same doctrines from the pulpit as formerly, and receive the sacraments from their own preachers in the usual manner; that they have set up no new means of grace, but adhere to class meetings, band meetings, prayer meetings, love feasts, and watch nights;" and surely all this is enough to put upon them the stamp of orthodoxy. His exhorting them, after this concession, to be sensible of the "sinfulness of their conduct, to repent of their rashness, to flee from their seducers, to humble themselves, confess their fault, and return to the fold of Christ," must all be taken gratuitously. By the "fold of Christ" he does not mean the church

of Christ, for his admission makes them members of that church; nor by "returning" to that fold does he mean that they had forsaken the Lord, and gone back again into the world. All he intends by this flourish is, that the old connection is emphatically the "flock of Christ," that the conference is the "government," its leading members the "dignities," and that he would like to see the dissentients bow the neck once more to their yoke. At the same time he has some misgivings on the subject, he apprehends that they "will feel some reluctance to retrace their steps," but assures them they "can only enjoy peace of mind by availing themselves of the invitation to return." Very considerate no doubt, and very merciful, if the seceders can but think so, and are willing to surrender up at once all their rights and privileges to these dignitaries of the church. This friend of liberty however has not forgotten to remind them of what they are to expect, for he is of opinion that the concessions made to the people three and thirty years ago, and which then yielded up only a part of their rights, "went to the extreme point of consistency," and he is not prepared to "justify the sacrifices then made for the sake of peace." The iron system would therefore be made still more unyielding, if this gentleman were raised to the seat of "government," and had the seceders within his power. Apostates from civil and religious liberty are generally found to be the worst of tyrants.

The verdict of Mr. Isaac against the seceders is however of little consequence; he is their eager and virulent opponent, his evidence is tainted and corrupt, and must be reputed and taken for what it is worth. The junta also in conference having constituted itself both accuser and judge, must be told that their decision stands for nothing; the complainants have a right to appeal to a higher court, the tribunal of the religious public, who will pass their unhesitating sentence against every species of ecclesiastical intolerance, whether in or out of the methodist connection; and though its present advocate may clap his wings and stretch his clarion throat, he must prepare himself for the cudgel that will be hurled against him by all the

adversaries of recreant and servile principles, about which there is a meanness and a selfishness that form the true repellant of human sympathy.

It would be useless to follow this author in all his vigaries. Mr. Isaac is in the habit of writing whatever comes into his mind, and shows no manner of deference for the judgment of his readers. The party especially, against whom he has published his Letters, are imagined to be so grossly ignorant that any thing in the shape of an argument was deemed sufficient, whether it bore the character of common sense or not. The principal of these curious reasonings, collected from different parts of his pamphlets, and which are intended to operate so powerfully on the minds of the seceders, will be briefly noticed in the following paragraphs.

1. He sounds an alarm about the sin and danger of schism, and tries to drive the separatists back to the ancient fold by raising an outcry against their new shepherds, as if they were 'grievous wolves entering in, not sparing the flock.' And not content with this, he speaks of them as "a company of showmen, exhibiting a few puppet missionaries; dishonest men, who do not believe what they would persuade others to believe." It is scarcely possible that the writer himself could have attached any credit to such calumnies at the time he penned them; but if he could "persuade others to believe them," his end might be answered. Surely the simple fact of dissent from conference methodism can no more be liable to the charge of moral dishonesty, than that of adhesion; and it is more than probable that Mr. Isaac himself was as honest a man at the time he disagreed with conference as he is at present, or since he suffered his book to be censured and suppressed as the condition of peace. It would have been as well therefore, if he had set himself right on this subject, and cleared himself of the charge of inconsistency, before he became the 'accuser of the brethren.' And as to heresy and schism, they are two theological scare-crows, set up by those who want to uphold a party, and to terrify

and frighten their opponents; but the trick is now too stale to succeed. The heresy however is with those who 'teach for doctrine the commandments of men,' and the schism in making that a term of communion which the scriptures have not made, and in calling for submission, on pain of exclusion, to mere discretionary regulations, as if they possessed all the infallibility and importance of divine and immutable law. It can never be pretended that mere points of discipline, whatever be their utility, are to be laid in the balance with moral precepts; and if any thing be a proper subject of forbearance among christians, it must surely be that which does not affect the existence of true religion, or the wellbeing of a christian society. The real schismatics in the case alluded to are Mr. Grinrod and his abettors, who rejected the local preachers, not for any moral offence, but for an alleged infraction of a rule of doubtful import, and which both parties interpreted in their own favour. The agents of conference claimed a right of interference which the others denied; it was not therefore so much a rejection of the rule as of its interpretation, to which the penalty of exclusion was attached. Had it been otherwise, and it were proved that the dissentients had erred in their construction, it was a much greater evil to cast them out of the church than to have suspended or rescinded a rule, 'more honoured in the breach than in the observance.' Mr. Isaac himself, in his happier days, furnished a pretty correct opinion on the subject when he said, "The worst of schismatics are they who magnify petty differences into matters of the utmost consequence, and make them terms of communion"—"Schism is sometimes a sin," he observes, "and sometimes a virtue." In the Corinthian church "the rich are blamed for *causing* a schism, and the poor who *made* it are not blamed, but pitied"—And again: "It is generally supposed that schism is a separation *from* a church, whereas in some instances it is a division *in* a church. The christians at Corinth are not charged with forming several societies in opposition to each other, nor are they cautioned against any such thing; they are merely reprov'd for creating dissension in the

church." If these sentiments are founded in truth, as no doubt they are, they go to condemn the conduct of the ultras, with whom Mr. Isaac has since coalesced. They are the party who stirred up "dissension," by getting a district committee to oppose the wishes of the members of the church; they "caused" the schism, and are, according to Mr. Isaac's own showing, "the worst of schismatics for magnifying petty differences, and making them terms of communion." *Eccles. Claims*, pp. 264—267.

2. It is alleged that the members of the old connection are enjoying the divine presence, and therefore it is a sad thing to leave them. "If you can prove," says this writer, "that God has left the methodists, you can justify your separation from them; but if you have abandoned them, and He continue with them, you have much cause for alarm at the precipitate step you have taken." Could any thing so puerile have been expected from a man who passes for a reasoner? Either he must have had a mean opinion of the understanding of those he professes to address, or was utterly at a loss for a plea to suit his purpose. It is not necessary to deny the special privilege claimed for the party whom he represents; but surely he does not mean to confine the divine presence to what some of his friends have denominated "the great temple of methodism;" yet if he does not, and the seceders in their lesser sanctuary should enjoy the same blessing; what becomes of the argument? All such appeals savour of pride and vain glory, and are utterly abhorrent from the feelings of true and genuine piety, which never says lo here, or lo there, but withdraws its own pretensions, and lies abased at the foot of the cross. Doubtful indeed must be the state of that society which requires of its leading members to make an ostentatious display of its spirituality and success, as an inducement for others to swell their numbers and share the glory. Too much does it resemble the vaunting of the jews in the prophet's time, who cried out 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we, while they hated their brethren and cast them out, saying, Let the Lord be glorified.' Many others have

also put forth similar pretensions, and to as little purpose; the scriptures alone are the standard of truth, and not the success nor the glorying of any party. The appeal might also have been spared as inapplicable to the case of the seceders, for they have *not* "left the methodists," though they have withdrawn from the party arrogating to themselves the exclusive right to that title. They adhere to the same doctrine and mode of worship as formerly, this writer himself bearing witness; they have left nothing behind but the dregs of the system, the covenant breakers, and their arbitrary power. The concessions and regulations of 1797, suspected and impugned by Mr. Isaac, is their bulwark, surrounded now with additional embrasures, and which will not easily be demolished by the bows and pellets of such an antagonist.

3. This gentleman acknowledges there is no difference of doctrinal sentiment, and when it suits his purpose he urges this as a reason why there is no justifiable ground of separation, though at other times he can insinuate that there is a disagreement on one fundamental point, which ought to "startle" and alarm them. A man whose object is not truth but victory, can take a brief on either side, but his special pleading will be heard with great suspicion. If there be no difference on points of doctrine, as indeed there is not, that may be a reason for union, while other things are a sufficient cause of separation. There is no material difference of belief in two of the largest sections of protestant dissenters, and none between them and the articles of the church of England; yet there are sufficient reasons for dissent, and for forming themselves into different denominations. Mr. Wesley himself did not disagree with the doctrinal articles of the established church, allowing him his own interpretation of them; yet he formed and organised a separate and distinct society, not recognised by that church. How then does it come to pass that the Leeds dissentients may not follow his example, and yet be blameless; and why have they not an equal right to withdraw from their former friends, whose doctrines nevertheless they cordially approve? There was a time when Mr.

Isaac took pleasure in affirming, that "the members were perfectly at liberty in joining the societies, and had the same liberty to withdraw whenever they think proper." He was then writing against episcopacy, and in favour of religious liberty: now that he has changed sides, and is become the defender of another hierarchy, he wishes to sink the question of religious liberty. But suppose the conference men to go farther than he intended, and should convert their president into a pope, and their popular preachers into bishops, for the purpose of extending their authority, and becoming more efficient lords of the heritage, and leave poor Isaac on one of the lower benches; would he not be one of the first to arraign their conduct, and withdraw his connection, in spite of the agreement in doctrinal sentiments? Every one must be assured of this, and equally assured of the fallacy he is now endeavouring to impose upon his readers.

4. The general piety of the ministers of the old connection should have formed a bond of union, and prevented a separation. "If the greater part of the ministers in any religious community be bad men," says Mr. Isaac, "the expediency of remaining in it may be justly doubted; but if a large majority of them be good men, the Spirit of Christ will never prompt a man to divide from them." He needs not be told that the piety of the ministers is not the question in dispute, and was not the ground of separation; he knows very well that the charge did not extend to persons, but to principles, and to such as no personal attainments could possibly justify; and why then does he go about to mystify the subject in this manner, except for the mere purpose of keeping out of sight the real point in dispute. Cannot principles be judged of apart from general character; must a person's piety be taken as a guarantee for the soundness of his creed? When an injury is inflicted, or oppression exercised, it is a poor apology to say the oppressor is a righteous man. If he be so, his conduct is the more aggravated. If the ministers alluded to be what this writer represents (and there is no wish to call in question their general piety) better things might have been expected

of them ; and let him attempt to disguise it as he may, the condemning fact is still against him, that certain individuals were suspended and excluded from society, against the consent of a majority of their brethren, and without any charge of immorality being exhibited against them. If these were righteous men, their doings were sufficiently unrighteous, and will be so considered in the judgment of every impartial person. Mr. Isaac pretends indeed that the voice of the brethren was entitled to no regard, "that the ends of justice could not be answered, if a delinquent were tried by his partners in guilt ; and as in this case the offender offered no apology, but gloried in what he had done, and was supported in it by his adherents, nothing remained but to make him an example." This intolerant doctrine is glossed over with a great deal of irrelevant matter about judges, juries, witnesses, and the criminal laws of the state, for the purpose of concealing the simple question at issue,—Whether a local preacher could be expelled against the wishes of his brethren, and in defiance of a rule made thirty years ago ; which says in effect, "that no society officer can be received without consent of the meeting, nor can any one be removed except upon the same plan." To call the individual a "delinquent" before he is tried, and to stigmatise him with that epithet after he has been acquitted by a majority of his brethren, whose conduct was approved by more than a thousand members on the spot, is a species of outrage worthy only of an insolent and domineering priesthood. The quibble by which Mr. Isaac endeavours to subvert the rule, and to deprive the people of their rights, is as paltry as the most degrading sophistry could invent. Because the rule vested in the meeting, including minister and official members, and not in the minister alone, the right of admission into society ; and therefore it was inferred that no one could be excluded without their mutual consent, a proposition that is fundamental to all societies where men are not entire slaves, under the whip of a driver ; Mr. Isaac by an easy subterfuge affirms that it would be as good an argument to say, "As no local preacher shall be taken upon the plan without

his own consent, so neither can he be expelled without his own consent." That is to say, If a candidate be admitted to communion by the suffrage of the people, he is not admitted by their suffrage, but with his own consent; and if afterwards expelled by their decision, he is not expelled by their decision, but with his own consent, his own consent being the same thing as the consent of the people!

It would be perfectly amusing to see how Mr. Isaac himself would act, if he should happen to sin, not against God, but against his masters in conference, and get himself excluded with bell, book and candle. No bullock unaccustomed to the yoke would kick more lustily, or set up a louder roar. When a few years ago he was only slightly and indirectly censured by a minute of conference for a few "unchristian levities and sarcasms" in a book which he had published, he wrote some Remarks on the proceedings of conference, in which he bitterly complained of the unjust and injurious treatment he had met with; and though the minute reflecting upon his conduct was professedly written "in the fear of God," and with a view of correcting and improving his literary and moral taste, without at all affecting his union with the body; he derided the admonition of the "conference orators," denied the right of "striking at his reputation" under pretence of doing it "in the fear of God," and in conclusion threatened to make some unpleasant disclosures, if the junta should continue their hostilities against *him*. Yet this same Mr. Isaac can now venture to defend the shameful treatment of the Leeds seceders, who were not slightly and indirectly censured as he had been for offending against the rules of religious decorum, but were visited with the heaviest censure and expelled from communion, simply for non-submission to the high authority of a superintendent, in matters where neither faith nor morals were concerned. Has Mr. Isaac cried Peccavi, and licked the dust, that he is now become so subservient to the party he lately held in contempt; or have the oligarchy made their peace with him, and sent him to Leeds to fight their battles? The union after all is not so very cordial

but he can admit that some of the dignities are "a little too fond of power," but thinks it a mere venial offence while unconnected with any charge of immorality. But if he really think so, why does he not admit the same plea on behalf of the seceders, who may be in his esteem "a little too fond of liberty," but who are not charged with any immorality. There is no great evil it seems in tyranny itself, provided only those who exercise it bear a virtuous character; and there would be less evil in it still, if *Mr. Isaac* were but admitted to a larger share. However this may be borne by other communities, bound hand and foot by human laws and institutions, it is what never can be endured in a religious society formed on the principles of the new testament. The pope may be "a little too fond of power," and so may that contemptible creature at Lisbon; and if this be all, *Mr. Isaac* will not be ashamed to become their apologist. Despotism to a certain extent, according to him, may be allowed in church and state, provided men are not actually dragged to the dungeon or the stake, the loss of liberty and independence being a matter of very little consequence. Most men however would think that an authority to do mischief should be utterly denied, that no one, much less a christian society, should be at the mercy of those who are enslaved by the love of power. Our author allows that the seceders have not left the old connection "because its members generally are not good people, nor because their ministers are generally corrupt." Certainly not, but because some of their rulers have assumed and exercised a power that is unjust, while they feel assured there is a goodly number of excellent men in the conference who seriously disapprove of the doings of these lord brothers; and that if their prudent advice could have been heard, no separation would have taken place. Why then does *Mr. Isaac* present himself as the advocate of men whom he before resisted and exposed, and of measures which he knows to be indefensible; and not rather remonstrate against their inordinate ambition and love of domination. If he be really afraid of their influence, he had better remain silent; it is extremely disinge-

nuous to allow *them* impunity, and at the same time endeavour to cast odium on the party oppressed by their proceedings.

5. Another plea is, "that nothing sinful was required by the agents of conference, nothing to hurt any man's conscience;" and therefore it was wrong to leave the old connection. To this it is sufficient to reply, there is scarcely any kind of superstition or will-worship which such a plea would not admit. All the uncommanded rites and ceremonies of the episcopal church, all the inventions and abominations of popery itself, have been urged upon the same ground,—that they are in themselves indifferent, and offer no violence to conscience. Were this admitted, there still remains the question of expediency, and how far the introduction of human observances is consistent with the purity and simplicity of christian worship. But the real state of the question stands upon much higher ground, as Mr. Isaac very well knows, though he has laboured hard to gain credit for his misstatements. The objection of the protestant methodists is founded precisely on the same principle as that of their predecessors in the time of Charles ii., though in reference to a different community. The generality of the nonconformists did not plead that reading the liturgy, wearing a surplice, using the sign of the cross, and other unscriptural ceremonies, would directly violate their consciences. They alleged that *imposing* these things upon them, and rendering them imperative, was inconsistent with christian liberty; they therefore entered their solemn protest against it, and suffered a cruel and unjust ejectment rather than comply. Whatever the protestant methodists may think of the inexpediency of introducing the organ or the liturgy into public worship, they have not pleaded, or need not plead, that it would be a violation of conscience; it is sufficient if their judgment disapprove. With the view of fastening upon them the sin of "hypocrisy," Mr. Isaac has represented them as entertaining conscientious objections against the organ at Brunswick chapel, and none at all against that at Burley; and against the introduction of the liturgy at Leeds, and none at

all against its use in London; but his representations are not to be depended upon, and in this instance there is a perversion of the truth. The objection did not lie so much against either of these appendages of public worship, as against the *arbitrary imposition* of them by ministerial authority, and contrary to the wishes of a decided majority of those in fellowship; and this they properly considered as a most unwarrantable assumption of power, to which they could not and ought not to submit. But as Mr. Isaac wanted to get up a case against them, he attacks them on the ground of an inconsistency which never existed. The objection however is irrefutable; for those who have a right to impose an organ or a liturgy on a voluntary society of christians, have an equal right to enjoin any thing they please; and Mr. Isaac ought not to complain if these masters in Israel should put him into lawn sleeves, and order him to wear the mitre. It would be of no use to object that his judgment was against this clerical finery, that he could preach as well without it, and should prefer his own simple costume; so long as the lawn and the velvet did not touch the conscience he is bound to submit, and to aid in the symbolization of methodism with the church establishment.

6. This writer has endeavoured to throw discredit on the seceders, by repeatedly insinuating that they have acted very differently from the reformers of the sixteenth century, who "divided from the church of Rome," he says, "because of her corruption of worship, as well as of doctrine," as if that were the primary or only reason of the separation. He then finds it easy and convenient to reflect on the seceders for having forsaken a communion with which they are agreed in both these important matters, and to show their discrepancy with the conduct of the reformers. Mr. Isaac knew very well, however he might presume on the ignorance of his readers, that other reasons influenced the conduct of the reformers, besides those he has selected for his purpose, and reasons which bear a direct parallel with those on which the seceders themselves have acted. The fact is, the reformation of the sixteenth century did *not* begin with objections

to the catholic dogmata, but against the arrogant assumption and abuse of power. Luther himself does not appear to have originally contemplated any opposition to the tenets or worship of the church, nor would he immediately have objected even to the sale of indulgences, had not the base conduct of the clergy first roused his indignation, and the arrogance of the pontiff sounded the tocsin of religious war. And when the intrepid reformer was accused of rashness for raising the standard of revolt, and admonished to recant his opinions and submit to holy church, he delivered an eloquent oration before the diet of Worms, in which he protested that he could not retract what he had said against the tyrannical doctrines of Rome, which had given such great offence, without betraying the cause of liberty and truth which he had firmly resolved to support. The rejection of the antichristian doctrines and idolatrous worship of the Romish church followed of course; but the reformation began where all other reformations and revolutions begin, both in church and state—in the resistance to arbitrary power. The authority assumed by a junta in the Wesleyan conference, though not fully developed, is the very germ and essence of popery; it is a power to enslave, if not the conscience, yet the understanding of the people; a power to impose modes and appendages of worship which their judgments disapprove, and to reject from communion whom they will, without the consent of the people. The seceders therefore began where the reformers began, they have at least adopted the same fundamental principle of resistance to antichristian usurpation, and which will no doubt be followed with the same success. The achievement involves neither difficulty nor danger; yet a lilliputian tyrant, though less formidable, is more contemptible than one of gigantic stature.

Another part of Mr. Isaac's address to the protestant methodists is on the subject of church government, with a view of exposing the errors they have committed in new-modelling some parts of the methodist discipline; but in this he has been equally unsuccessful as

in his attacks on their character and secession. He speaks very complacently of his having "demonstrated" several things: but to whom or to what? To his own satisfaction possibly, yet even this is doubtful. His Letters have demonstrated nothing but the total failure of his efforts to support the expiring cause of bigotry and intolerance, and to bring odium on the friends of religious liberty. If however the seceders should have erred on some minor points of discipline, there will be time and opportunity for a closer revision; but at any rate the crudities of this writer can never be adopted, without exposing themselves to still grosser absurdities.

He has discovered a new order of church rulers never before heard of, to whom he at once transfers, very conveniently, all authority and power; and is so delighted with his own invention that he makes every thing yield to its support, and does not hesitate to put to the torture any text that stands in his way. His great object is evidently to make the constitution and discipline of the primitive church to quadrate with the scheme adopted in his own connection, including the supplements which he has himself provided. In order to support the hierarchical elevation, episcopals have found it necessary to convert Timothy and Titus into two archbishops, having under their direction all the bishops and elders in Crete and elsewhere; and Mr. Isaac is for considering them nearly in the same light. The Wesleyan system having placed the government of its societies in the hands of the travelling preachers, under the controul of conference, he judged it expedient to search for a precedent somewhere in the new testament. The pastors and elders of the apostolic churches, to whose care the oversight of the flock was committed, did not fully answer his purpose; he could not there find the gradation he wanted, nor any model for a Bishop of bishops. Contrary to the doctrine of his associates, who have hitherto contended that "the travelling preachers are the legitimate pastors of the methodist flock," Mr. Isaac admits that the class leaders and other resident officers answer very truly to the ancient elders and

deacons; but as neither the methodist church nor these its pastors are allowed to exercise any thing more than a subordinate authority, and are fettered like asses to a tether, it was necessary in order to keep the thing in countenance, to adduce some sort of precedent for the itinerant preachers assuming a power over the whole society. This he finds, most happily, in the office of the EVANGELISTS, who he thinks were placed over both churches and ministers, as an example to future generations. Most fortunate man! But while making this discovery it is wonderful he did not see in the council of Jerusalem the exact prototype of the Wesleyan conference; this would have completed his scheme, and have seated the dignitaries for ever on "the throne of methodism."

Mr. Isaac is quite unfortunate however in his attempt to establish an analogy between the holy evangelists and modern itinerant preachers, though he considers them so nearly alike that he proposes to "use these terms interchangeably, as of similar import." It is true there is a general agreement in their work and office, they both 'bring good tidings,' and so does an apostle; but it does not follow that every one who preaches the gospel is therefore an evangelist. A deacon in the christian church is properly a servant, but every servant is not a deacon, for he is a servant of a particular kind and for special purposes. An apostle is a messenger or missionary, but every messenger and missionary is not an apostle; an apostle is a messenger or missionary of an extraordinary kind, one immediately sent of God. So an evangelist is an itinerant minister, but every itinerant is not an evangelist, any more than he is an apostle; an evangelist being a special officer of the primitive church, and endued with the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost.

This writer affirms in one page that "Timothy and Titus, and *many* other evangelists, were chosen by the apostles;" and then in the next page admits that Philip and Timothy "are the *only* persons who are expressly called evangelists in the new testament." The latter of these is the only correct statement, and of course he must take his precedent from one of these

evangelists for what he wishes to establish; but it is sufficiently evident that both of them were inspired, and will not therefore serve for an example. Of Philip it is recorded that he preached and baptised in Samaria, and in other places, and that he wrought miracles in confirmation of his doctrine. Acts viii. 6, 13. Timothy, indirectly termed an evangelist, possessed some extraordinary endowments, by the laying on of the apostle's hands, and the prophecies that went before concerning him. 1 Tim. i. 18. 2 Tim. i. 5, 6. Neither of these therefore can be brought to bear upon the subject, since there is no reasoning from extraordinary to common and ordinary cases; and Philip and Timothy are by his own acknowledgement, "the *only* persons expressly called evangelists in the new testament." What is predicated of these holy men cannot be applied to ordinary teachers, any more than the apostolic presidency itself could be sustained by those who have not received a similar commission. As to Mr. Isaac's "*many other* evangelists chosen by the apostles," they are all fictitious, and have no existence but in his own imagination. Who they were and what they did is nowhere recorded in the scriptures. Stephen, another deacon of the church in Jerusalem, preached as well as Philip, but he is nowhere called an evangelist.

His speculations on the work and office of the evangelists, and their perpetuity in the church, are equally amusing for their novelty. "The apostles and prophets," he allows, "were extraordinary officers, and of temporary standing in the church;" but evangelists he considers to be "permanent," and that to them is committed the government of the church. After the decease of the apostles, "every thing was entrusted to their discretion; they have power to appoint elders, and to perform any act of discipline, which according to their judgment might be necessary for the perfection of the external order of the churches." This delightful vision might certainly lend some support to Mr. Isaac's theory of ecclesiastical polity, and probably for this reason the seer's eyes were opened to behold it; but unfortunately, it was neither given by the

spirit of wisdom, nor of revelation. A discretionary power to do what may seem necessary for perfecting the external order of the church!—and then that “the evangelical office,” thus explained, is to be “perpetuated,” and successively “conferred by evangelists!”—what can his holiness the pope wish for more! How is the fine gold become dim, and how are the mighty fallen! No doctrine of the council of Trent could open a wider door to all the corruptions of human pride and folly, or set up in the temple of God a grosser abomination. The “protestors” however need not be greatly alarmed by these prognostics; such sort of evangelists are not likely to come just yet, or there are some who would be able to give a good account of them; nor would they be tolerated, much less “perpetuated” in any church, save that of which Mr. Isaac is himself a member. Protestants in general have seen enough of the folly and danger of allowing a discretionary power to any description of ecclesiastics, under pretense of perfecting the order of the church; and the protestant methodists have felt its effects too keenly, ever to suffer the cloven foot to intrude into their sanctuary any more.

As no legitimate argument was to be derived from the title given to these primitive and extraordinary ministers, or from their special endowments and occupation, to show that Mr. Isaac and his associates are the evangelists of the new testament; it only remained for him to prove, from what they did or were commissioned to do, that they were the very models of these modern pretenders. This was easily done; and the holy evangelists are accordingly decked out with all the powers and prerogatives assumed by the conference preachers; and then it would be very strange, if the similitude did not at once become obvious. This however is like setting up a pope, and then finding a parallel in St. Peter. Hence he gives precedence to the evangelists before all other ecclesiastical officers, like the travelling preachers in his own connection; and then the power of appointing elders, to render the comparison more complete. It so happens however, that “the only persons called evangelists in the new

testament" will not answer his purpose, for they neither took precedence nor ordained elders. The first of these is Philip, a deacon of the church in Jerusalem; and after he became an evangelist nothing is said of his taking precedence, or having had any thing to do in the appointment of elders in any church. The next is Timothy, who is indirectly termed an evangelist; but the scriptures do not ascribe to him the prerogatives imputed by Mr. Isaac. Instead of appointing elders, he was himself appointed to the ministry by the elders, or 'the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.' 1 Tim. iv. 14. Where then are the "many other evangelists chosen by the apostles," of which this writer speaks? Sacred history gives no account of them, and his apocryphal statement is without authority. After the persecution of Stephen the members of the church at Jerusalem were all scattered abroad, except the apostles, and 'went everywhere preaching the word; but as they are not called 'evangelists' in the scriptures, and no mere preacher is so denominated, whether itinerant or otherwise, it is an unwarrantable liberty to appropriate this title to himself and his associates. He might as well talk of modern apostles, as of modern evangelists, and revive all the pretensions of the holy Roman apostolic church, and publish another calendar of saints and miracles. Some which 'say they are apostles, and are not, have been found liars;' and those who say they are evangelists, and not, are in danger of being involved in the same condemnation.

But his strong hold and last refuge is in Titus, who though not called an evangelist, will he thinks answer his purpose. If we wish to know who Titus was, Paul has furnished us with an answer. 'Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow helper: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.' 2 Cor. viii. 23. Not content with this humble designation, episcopalians, to answer their purpose, have made Titus to be 'the first bishop of the church of the Cretians,' with power to ordain others as his successors. Mr. Isaac holds the same doctrine in effect, only instead

of making him a bishop he calls him an evangelist, as better suited to his purpose. All this is founded on the talismanic words of Paul, in Titus i. 5. 'For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.' And what then? Why then it follows that there is to be a succession of evangelists, down to Mr. Daniel Isaac, who are to superintend and govern the church, to admit and exclude members, to appoint and dismiss elders, on their own authority! All the power that the pope wants is to do that which is right in his own eyes; and a society must be very willing to part with their liberty who can submit to such reasoning as this. Paul and Titus had visited Crete, where they made many disciples, who afterwards associated together for religious worship. Paul, on leaving the island, directed Titus to organize and set in order the newly-formed societies, and assist in the ordination of their elders. But who, excepting those who are "a little too fond of power," would see in this simple and very natural transaction, the assumption of archiepiscopal authority; or imagine that Titus 'ordained elders in every city,' without the suffrage of the people. If two agents of the bible society should now visit Crete, and found or made a number of friends to the institution during their stay there, and one of them should be left behind to form and organise societies in every place, to carry on the general design of the parent institution; would any one believe that he formed these associations and appointed their officers on his own authority, without the concurrence of the parties concerned? Or if missionaries visited the same island in a state of heathenism, and successfully introduced the gospel among its inhabitants, would they not act precisely in the same manner, following the precepts and examples of the new testament in the constitution of new societies.

Paul left Timothy at Ephesus, that he might 'charge some that they teach no other doctrine.' 1 Tim. i. 3. But if the Ephesian elders had been duly attached to the truth, he need not have left him there for such a purpose, and neither Paul nor Timothy would have

been displeased with them for superseding the exercise of their authority. And when the apostle left Titus in Crete to set in order the things that were wanting, and to ordain elders in every city, he would not have complained of the Cretians, if they had had sufficient wisdom to have regulated their own affairs according to the will of God ; nor would have considered their 'order' as disorder, because it had been effected by ordinary means, and without the interposition of any foreign aid. Had 'elders' also been already ordained among them, competent to assist in the ordination of others, instead of objecting to the validity of their proceedings, both Paul and Titus would, 'though absent in the flesh, have been with them in the spirit, joying and beholding their order and the steadfastness of their faith in Christ.' The constitution and discipline of the christian church are founded less in positive institutes, than in moral fitness and propriety, nothing more being delivered to us than a few general principles and examples, from which we are not allowed to depart. Let but churches be planted, set in order, and scripturally organised ; and whether it be done by inspired or uninspired teachers, all is good and acceptable to Christ.

Let Mr. Isaac be as extravagant as he may, he cannot claim for his evangelists more authority than was exercised by the apostles themselves ; and there is no proof that they exercised that power over the churches, which he himself wishes to exercise over the methodist societies. The apostles neither admitted nor expelled members, neither appointed nor dismissed pastors and deacons, without the suffrages of the people. The principle of a common right is fully recognised and established at the very commencement of christian society, and continued throughout the whole of the apostolic history. After the defection of Judas, when an apostle was to be chosen in his stead, who was also to be an elder of the church at Jerusalem, all its members were assembled, consisting of a hundred and twenty ; and Peter having described the requisite qualifications, left it to them to make their free election. The whole brotherhood nominated two of their num-

ber, prayed for divine direction, cast forth their lots, and left the disposal thereof to the Lord. The lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. Acts i. Peter, though acting as president on this occasion, did nothing without the concurrence of the disciples, and the disciples did nothing without him. This plain example, so agreeable to the nature and fitness of things, is no doubt recorded as a guide to the church in all future ages, that pastors and elders are to be appointed by the people. And though it related to the call of an extraordinary officer, to one who was to be an apostle as well as an elder of the church, the argument is not weakened but strengthened by that very consideration; for if in such a case it was the mind of Christ that the suffrages of the people should be respected, much more in all ordinary cases, where their own immediate interest is principally concerned.

Mr. Isaac himself, before he dreamed of successive evangelists with more than apostolic power, gave a similar view of the subject, as may be seen in his *Ecclesiastical Claims*, p. 84. "The appointment of Matthias, he says, is remarkable. Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and made a speech on the necessity of electing another apostle to fill the place of Judas; and '*they appointed two, Justus and Matthias.*' This shows that the election was *in the disciples*; and when they could not determine which of the two was most suitable, the apostles did not pretend to take the matter *out of their hands*, but all the parties agreed to refer the election to God. They therefore prayed, and gave forth their lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias; and all we read more about this business is, that he was numbered with the eleven apostles. Here the whole affair of making an apostle was managed *by God and the people*, without the eleven, who were present, presuming either to appoint or consecrate him." If then the apostles did not "pretend" to take the matter out of the hands of the people, it might be asked, How came Mr. Isaac to "pretend" to do so, and to transfer this power to the hands of his evangelists! And if there is to be a succession of such gifted

rulers, who treat christian societies and their officers as a herd of inferior creatures under the dominion of a master, christianity itself would be a highly equivocal blessing to mankind.

Had an opposite example occurred afterwards, it might have been alleged that the popular election of Matthias was not intended as a precedent ; but in the very next instance the same principle is adopted, in the choice of ordinary officers of the church. In the course of the same year, while the apostles continued at Jerusalem, acting as elders and pastors of the church, the number of disciples was so greatly multiplied that it was judged expedient to select several of the brethren to assist in the temporal concerns of the church. The apostles however were so far from acting on their own responsibility in this matter, as our modern evangelists would not hesitate to do, that ' they called the multitude of the disciples together,' and stated the propriety of appointing additional officers. They then pointed out the requisite qualifications, and directed the people to select suitable persons from among themselves, not as a matter of courtesy but of right, which properly belonged to them. ' The saying pleased the whole multitude,' and they chose seven of their brethren, ' whom they set before the apostles ; and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. And the word of God encreased, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem.' Acts vi. No reason can be given why the apostles did not nominate and appoint those whom they knew to be fit for the office, had they not considered it the right and privilege of the people, and according to the mind of Christ, that they should choose their own officers. And if this is fit and proper, in reference to their charitable donations ; how much more are they entitled to choose those to whom their spiritual interests are entrusted ! Mr. Isaac indeed affirms, in his first letter to the seceders, that " the appointment of deacons," as well as of pastors, " belonged to the evangelists according to the new testament ;" but this is directly contrary to truth, and contrary to his own statement in a former publication, where he asserts that " our Lord and his

apostles made *the laity* the guardians of orthodoxy; they having no other interest in religion than the salvation of their souls, could be under no temptation to corrupt it." "The clergy," he adds, "pretend to be a distinct order of men from the laity, possessed of a divine right and independent power to do what they please in the church." And by this time he has practically exemplified the truth of his own remark. Eccles. Claims, pp. 126—129.

The practice which obtained in the church at Jerusalem, in reference to the choice of pastors and deacons, was evidently intended as a model for all succeeding ages; and we accordingly find the apostles acting on the same principle many years afterwards. When Paul and Barnabas travelled through one of the provinces of lesser Asia, comforting and confirming the souls of the disciples, it is said 'they ordained them elders in every church, with prayer and fasting.' Acts xiv. 23. In Tyndale's translation, of 1531, and in all the old English versions, the passage is rendered, 'They ordained elders *by election* in all the congregations,' that is, *by the suffrage of the people*. Mr. Isaac admitted this construction when he wrote his book on Eccles. Claims, p. 140, and that it implied no special exercise of authority; and perhaps by and bye he will go back again to his former opinions.— But let him contradict himself as he may, it is evident the holy apostles neither claimed nor exercised that kind of authority which he confers upon his apocryphal evangelists; they were in all things tenderly mindful of the rights and privileges of the people. Even when messengers accompanied Paul in his travels, to convey the public contributions from one church to another, he did not himself undertake to make the appointment, but left the churches to choose their own messengers. When writing to the Corinthians he says, 'Whomsoever ye shall approve, - them will I send to bring your liberality to Jerusalem;' and of a companion of Titus he says, that he was 'chosen of the churches' for this purpose. 1 Cor. xvi. 3. 2 Cor. viii. 19. It is inconceivable that, amidst this delicacy of deportment, the same apostle should take upon him to appoint pastors

and deacons, without the suffrage of the people, and contrary to the example of all his brethren at Jerusalem. Much more incredible is it that he should have left Titus to ordain elders in every city, on his own authority, and then to convey this power to some modern evangelists, to justify their total disregard of popular rights, and the tyranny they may choose to exercise over the church, in the name of Paul and Titus. He that can believe this is prepared to believe any thing.

Nothing is more manifest than that a bishop or pastor is the first permanent officer in the church, and the highest title assumed for many ages after the apostles. But a bishop is no other than an elder or overseer of a single congregation, as appears from each of these names being given to the presbyters of the church at Ephesus, who met Paul at Miletus. Acts xx. 17, 28. Any office therefore in the present day, which claims the oversight of pastors or bishops, must be antisciptural. The apostles, in the exercise of pastoral authority, did not act separately from other elders, or as being placed above them, but in conjunction with them, as being themselves elders. 1 Pet. v. 1. Every thing done by these inspired men, except what was extraordinary and miraculous, is fit and proper to be done by ordinary ministers, without any claim whatever to preeminence. So far as they were inspired they neither have nor can have any successors, and those who pretend to be such might as well claim to be prophets, or any thing else which their vanity may suggest.

The attempt to raise the would-be evangelists of modern times into notice and distinction, and to give them precedence of all the elders and presbyters of the church, from the mere circumstance of Paul having in one instance mentioned the apostles and evangelists *before* the ordinary officers of the church, is so puerile as scarcely to be worthy of any notice. The sacred writer in enumerating the various gifts bestowed for the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body of Christ, has placed apostles, prophets, and evangelists before ordinary teachers. Ephes. iv. 11. But

what possible argument can be derived from this, to establish a precedence among ordinary ministers, who are neither apostles, prophets, nor evangelists, but only pastors and teachers. And how does it happen that in another enumeration of the ordinary and extraordinary officers of the church, the same apostle should altogether *omit* the mention of evangelists, if they were to be permanent ministers, and to have supreme authority in the church. 'God hath set in the church,' says the sacred writer, 'first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers.' 1 Cor. xii. 28. In this remarkable specification there is but one class of permanent ministers, comprised under the term 'teachers;' the others were evidently extraordinary, and ceased with the age of miracles. But no mention is here made of evangelists, much less of their taking precedence of the elders of the church. The affected distinction is unscriptural and highly pernicious, fostering a spirit of pride and vain glorying, where all are required by love to serve one another. If in a large society, like that of the Wesleyan methodists, there are to be as many officers as the duties to be performed, they would form a complete hierarchy, ascending by different grades from the class leader to his holiness the president of conference. In the church of God there are no superiors, and no inferiors, besides what is created by different degrees of intellectual and moral excellence. It is not in religious as in civil society, where some are masters and others servants, some kings and governors and others subjects. 'One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.'

This writer not being sparing of his assertions, takes upon himself to say, that "elders are never once in the bible represented as receiving new members; that this belongs to the evangelists, who are likewise authorised to appoint and depose elders, and to restore them on their repentance." Who then admitted the multitude of Jewish converts during the feast of pentecost? Three thousand were added to the church at one time, and daily additions were made afterwards: and how were they admitted? It cannot be pretended that the baptism of these converts was of itself an

admission into society, or that it constituted them members of the church at Jerusalem, without any other recognition; for that is stated as a distinct act subsequent to the administration of the ordinance, and is not necessarily connected with it. John baptised great multitudes before any church was formed in Judea; Philip baptised many in Samaria, but we read of no church existing in that city; and the eunuch also, who instead of being united to any society, went home to his own country. If baptism be an initiatory ordinance, it is only as rendering its subjects eligible to communion, but it does not make them actual members of any church. The national establishment, holding as it does the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, recognises all as members who have been baptised by its ministers; but Mr. Isaac surely does not admit this unscriptural and delusive tenet, nor would the church to which he belongs admit persons to fellowship merely on the ground of their having been baptised, whether in infancy or in adult years, without requiring any other proof of their conversion. But if better evidence is required, and a candidate is not admitted without it, baptism neither makes him a member of the church, nor entitles him to be so considered. As to members being admitted into the primitive church by "the evangelists or travelling preachers," it is an assertion destitute of truth, intended only to keep in countenance the chimerical theory of Mr. Isaac. "Evangelists or travelling preachers" had no existence at the time that multitudes were added to the church in Jerusalem, nor till several years afterwards; 'all that believed were together and had all things common,' and neither apostles nor evangelists had commenced their itinerant labours. The converts therefore were received, if at all, 'by the apostles *and elders*,' with the consent of the whole church, by whom every thing relating to their fellowship was transacted. Acts xv. 22.

The zeal of this writer to gain distinction for his self-created evangelists, and confer upon them the government of the church, induces him to censure the seceders for placing the elders before their itinerants,

and taking the power into their own hands, and so subverting the theory he had ingeniously devised. But as their itinerants, from the nature of their occupation, neither have nor can have the stated charge of any particular congregation, the seceders acted very properly in sending them out, 'not to baptise but to preach the gospel,' and consign the administration of ordinances and of discipline to the resident elders and presbyters, who are acknowledged by Mr. Isaac to be the real pastors of the methodist flock. In making this arrangement the seceders did not intend to offer any dishonour to their missionaries, much less to "strip and degrade them," as he wishes to insinuate, but to leave them more at liberty to pursue the great object of their mission! In this they follow the example of other denominations, who employ itinerants in their home missions, exclusively in the work of preaching; and no less the example of primitive times, when the pastors and elders superintended the flock, while the apostles and others 'went everywhere preaching the word.' When it suited his purpose this writer took a similar view of the subject, in order to show that the discipline of the church was in the hands of its local officers, and to meet the pretensions of the episcopal clergy.

"The apostles were *not* governors of the church, he says; at least not in the sense our bishops are." Of course, if the apostles themselves were not governors, the evangelists were not, nor could the power have been conveyed to them. "To have been the fixed and stated governors of particular churches, would have been inconsistent with their general commission, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. And they could not be constituted governors of the universal church, for this plain reason, because it was impossible for them to execute ecclesiastical discipline in every christian society they formed. For instance, consider for a moment the astonishing travels and labours of the apostle Paul; how could he exercise episcopal jurisdiction over the churches he planted, when he was generally some thousands of miles distant from some of them; and

how could remote churches know where to find him, when he was perpetually changing his residence? The practice of the apostles was, when they had planted a church, to appoint governors, or leave the brethren to manage their own affairs, according to circumstances." Eccles. Claims, pp. 82, 83. And were not the evangelists, or those who accompanied the apostles in their labours, in the same predicament? How then could this imaginary "government," rather, 'the care of all the churches,' be devolved upon them? From this very circumstance the care must, in the nature of things, have been entrusted to the resident pastors, who watched over their respective flocks as those who must give an account.

And though this writer has repeatedly said, that the government of the church was committed to evangelists, and to them in succession; that they only have a right to admit and expel members, to appoint and depose elders, and that the discipline of the church does not belong to the private members and their local officers; he will find no market for this species of conference prudence out of his own immediate connection. The letters addressed to the protestant methodists are a tissue of contradictions to the sentiments contained in his former publication, and to the scriptures of truth. In his book on Ecclesiastical Claims, the following opinions are reiterated, and are of themselves a sufficient answer to the servile principles and dogmatical assertions he has lately advanced. "It does not appear that any officers were appointed in the church of Corinth, because the discipline of it was executed by *the whole society*. In the case of the incestuous person, the apostle directed the brethren, 'when gathered together,' to deliver him unto Satan, and censures them for not having done this already, as they possessed a power to *judge their own members*. And this punishment, we are told, 'was inflicted of many.'" p. 83. "The discipline of the church of Corinth was executed by *the laity*. They had retained the sin of the incestuous person, and cut him off from their communion." p. 175. The case of Saul and Barnabas, Acts xiii. 1—3, "proves that equals are

authorised to elect and ordain their own superiors, a principle that traces the origin of church power *to the people*; the people may make teachers, and the teachers bishops. This strips their lordships, the [evangelists] of nearly the whole of their assumed importance. At this famous ordination no spiritual powers are given, either to preach the gospel or *govern* the church." p. 86. "If Timothy was made a bishop, it was either of the church universal, or of a particular church. If the former, he was a pope, clothed with supreme and independent power. But each of the other apostles had as much right as Paul to make such an officer; and this supposes that they might have made twelve governors of the universal church, each exercising a jurisdiction independent of the others." p. 97. "Neither precept nor example can be produced from the new testament to support the opinion, that the apostles ordained an order of men superior to presbyters, and vested in them the exclusive privilege of ordaining all church officers." p. 101. Of course, appointing a succession of evangelists for this purpose is a mere fiction. "In constituting churches, the apostles were guided by circumstances;—in some they appointed presbyters, in others they advised the aged to assume the office, in others they left the exercise of discipline to *all the members in a general meeting*; and the office of the ministry they left free to all. A few grains of common sense, and the spirit of christianity, are better guides in these matters, than all the infallible priests the church has ever produced." p. 142. "The leaders' meeting has power to admit and exclude members, to elect new leaders to inflict church censures on the immoral, and to make new regulations for the particular society to which they belong, provided these do not infringe upon the general rules of the body." p. 143. And though this amusing and erratic writer, in his letters to the "protestors," has ridiculed the idea of their pastors and elders being competent to their office, and asks "whether common sense would decide that a man who is following secular employments six days out of seven is better qualified to govern the church, than another who devotes his whole life to the study

of religion and the service of Christ ;" he has very satisfactorily answered this question himself, in his Eccles. Claims ; and if he had not, it might very truly be answered in the affirmative, if he is to " devote all his time " in perverting the scriptures on this subject in the manner he has done, for the vain and sinister purpose of magnifying the power of the priesthood. In the passage alluded to it is stated, that in the early ages the bishops were plain and illiterate men, remarkable rather for their piety and zeal than for their learning and eloquence ; that a farmer, a shipwright, or a sailor would preach much better on some subjects, than a learned gentleman who is ignorant of the concerns of common life. He also tells the tale of Alexander the collier being ordained bishop of Comana, and thinks that some of the Newcastle and Kingswood colliers would look grave, learned, and spiritual, " were they only dressed in petticoats and powdered wigs !"

Mr. Isaac is quite welcome to his opinions, but it is a little too bad, after having been the advocate of liberal principles himself, to turn round and beat his fellow servants for embracing similar sentiments. He ought in all fairness to have set himself right on the subject before he commenced his virulent attack on the protestant methodists ; and if he did not choose to announce his recantation, he should have remained silent. He cannot by any possibility maintain the sentiments he advanced in 1815, and those which now appear in his letters to the protestant methodists.

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